

***D'AMES ET D'AILES (of souls and wings)* by Janick Belleau.** Editions du tanka francophone & Janick Belleau, Quebec, 2010. ISBN 978-2-9810770-5-9 \$20.00 Canadian Enquiries: [www.revue-tanka-francophone.com](http://www.revue-tanka-francophone.com)

reviewed by Joanne Morcom

In her introductory essay for this collection, Janick Belleau writes that tanka poetry "...unites a profoundly intimate emotion with an intense physical sensation - both expressed effortlessly." She might have been referring to her own work, as in this engaging example from the *Between Culture and Nature* section:

heat haze  
the cry of geese  
on the quay  
I question  
my own agitation

The *Burning Fire* tanka link sensuality with such everyday objects as swaying grass, a lavender scent and even soft-boiled eggs. In the remaining sections, *Walking toward Winter*, *Roots*, *Solitary*, *The Last Sleep* and *The Beyond*, the poet continues to explore "[t]he parallels between life and cycles of nature ..." as in:

end of fall  
the maple defoliating  
I too—  
if I could see my mother again  
my mirror in twenty years

Many of the tanka reflect a bittersweet awareness of life's brevity, with an anticipated sense of letting go and loss. The final poem in the collection is a poignant example:

at the instant of my death  
I pray to wake  
one last time  
I do not want to leave you  
without a farewell kiss, my love

The introductory essay (translated from French by Maxianne Berger) traces the development of tanka by Japanese and French poetesses from the 9th to the 21st century. Belleau notes that "Themes of classical tanka have changed little in thirteen centuries" and that love remains a universal subject. This is apparent in most, if not all, of *D'AMES ET D'AILES* 91 tanka. Here's one that's both touching and humorous:

along the green road  
on a midsummer day  
a bay of diamonds  
wild with joy I go to you  
wearing red lipstick

As mentioned on the back cover, this collection marks the first time in nearly 50 years that a Francophone woman poet has written a tanka book with English translations. Also noteworthy are the poet's lovely photographs which appear on the front cover and at the beginning of all seven sections. *D'AMES ET D'AILES* is a unique and exquisite offering from a poet whose tanka journey continues to delight everyone who shares it with her.